



### Interest Groups Timetable for December 2023

Please note that this timetable could be subject to change at short notice. Please check the website or with the Groups' Leaders for latest news.

Group	Date	Time	Venue
Monthly Meeting	Tue 19 <sup>th</sup>	2 pm	Congregational Church, Ashby. Gresley Male Voice Choir followed by tea, coffee and mince pies
Arts and Crafts	Thu 7 <sup>th</sup>	10 am	Packington Village Hall
Breakfast	Thu 18 <sup>th</sup>	10 am	Lakeside Bistro, Shortheath Rd, Moira DE12 6BW
Bridge	Mon 4 <sup>th</sup> Mon 11 <sup>th</sup> Mon 18 <sup>th</sup>	11 am – 1 pm 7-9 pm 11 am – 1 pm	Ivanhoe Social Club.
Calligraphy	Tue 12 <sup>th</sup>	10 am	At Lynda's. Continuing with the Christmas theme.
Calligraphy 2	Wed 6 <sup>th</sup>	10 am	148 Woodside, Ashby.
Coffee and Chat	Wed 13 <sup>th</sup>	10 am	Sunnyside Restaurant, Leicester Road, Ibstock LE67 6HL
Computer	Wed 6 <sup>th</sup> Mon 18 <sup>th</sup>	2 pm	16 Winchester Way
Croquet	-	-	Croquet will restart in the Spring
Digital Photography	Thu 7 <sup>th</sup>	10 am	16 Winchester Way. Theme 'Winter water'
Drawing and painting	Wed 20 <sup>th</sup>	10 am	Venue TBA
Family History	Wed 13 <sup>th</sup>	2 pm	2 Marlborough Way
Food from Afar	Thu 7 <sup>th</sup>	6 for 6.30 pm	La Torre Restaurant, 48 High Street, Coalville LE67 3EE
French	Mon 11 <sup>th</sup>	11 am	Ivanhoe Club, Wilfred Place, Ashby
Gardening	Thu 21 <sup>st</sup>	1 pm	Packington Village Hall Secret Santa and buffet. Please bring your own plate, bowl and cutlery. Food and drinks will be provided free of charge. Also please bring a wrapped, unlabelled, garden related gift up to the value of £6

Group	Date	Time	Venue
History	-	-	No meeting in December
Industrial Heritage	-	-	No meeting in December
Literature	Tue 12 <sup>th</sup>	1:30 pm	Sandra's house
Lunch	-	-	No meeting in December. See Social events.
Medium Walks	Mon 11 <sup>th</sup>	9.45 for 10am start	Meet at the Beacon Hill Lower car park on Breakback Road, LE12 8TA
Music Appreciation	Wed 6 <sup>th</sup>	10 am	Mike's at 91 Woodside, LE65 2NU
Reading	-	-	No meeting in December
Recorder	Thu 14 <sup>th</sup>	10 am	St Matthew's Community Hall, Overseal
Science & Technology	Tue 12 <sup>th</sup>	2 pm	Packington Village Hall. Tony Davison "In Search of the Snow Leopard"
Scrabble	Mon 4 <sup>th</sup> Mon 18 <sup>th</sup>	10.30 am	The Bulls Head, Ashby
Short Walks	Fri 15 <sup>th</sup>	10 am	Meet at the Oakthorpe colliery picnic site, Ashby Road, Donisthorpe DE12 7QG
Social Events	Thu 14 <sup>th</sup>	12.30 for 1pm	Christmas lunch at Willesley Park Golf Club
Supper Club	-	-	No meeting in December
Walking	Tue 5 <sup>th</sup>	9.30	Christmas walk. Meet at Kevin and Christine's house, 10 Rydal Gardens LE65 1FJ for sausage / bacon cobs, cakes and hot drinks. Followed by Packington walk of 3.5 miles
Wine Appreciation	Wed 20 <sup>th</sup>	7 pm	Annie's house. Christmas party. Bring some food and something you'd like to drink at Christmas. Bring your own plates and cutlery too.

### Interest Groups Timetable for early January 2024

Group	Date	Time	Venue
Walking	Tue 2 <sup>nd</sup>	9.45 for 10 am start	Meet at Ticknall Village hall car park.
Calligraphy	Wed 3 <sup>rd</sup>	TBA	Our Christmas meal
Music Appreciation	Wed 3 <sup>rd</sup>	10 am	TBA
Computer	Wed 3 <sup>rd</sup>	2 pm	16 Winchester Way
Arts and Crafts	Thu 4 <sup>th</sup>	10 am	Packington Village Hall
Digital Photography	Thu 4 <sup>th</sup>	10 am	16 Winchester Way
Recorder	Thu 4 <sup>th</sup>	10 am	St Matthew's Community Hall, Overseal
Food from Afar	Thu 4 <sup>th</sup>	6 for 6.30 pm	TBA

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS



### **Christmas Lunch - Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> December**



Just a reminder that the Christmas Lunch will be at the Willesley Golf Club on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> December at 12.30 for 1pm. All tickets are now sold.



### **Burns Night Supper – Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> January 2024**



Thurs 25<sup>th</sup> January 7 for 7.30pm at Willesley Park Golf Club.

Traditional three course meal of soup, haggis neeps and tatties (veggie haggis or chicken also available) and Cranachan for dessert. 2 bottles of wine per table of 8 plus whisky to toast the haggis.

There will be the Piping in of the Haggis, the Address to the Haggis and various entertainments.

Tickets are on sale now at £30 from Glenys [socials@ashbyu3a.co.uk](mailto:socials@ashbyu3a.co.uk), or 01530 560521. Also available at the next Monthly Meeting on Tues 19<sup>th</sup>.

Payment please by BACS transfer to Ashby u3a 08-92-99 67259878 or cheque payable to Ashby u3a.

### **Ashby u3a Group Holiday to Bournemouth - June 2024**

The intention is to have a 5 day/ 4 night half-board stay in the Bournemouth area, with some excursions. Val is currently trying to book a hotel with sufficient single rooms for all those who have expressed a wish to go. A decision on the viability of the trip will be made soon.

Contact Val Reed [treasurer@ashbyu3a.co.uk](mailto:treasurer@ashbyu3a.co.uk) or 01530 564279 who can give you more details.

### **History Group Summer Coach Trip to Bath – Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> August 2024**

Cost £25 pp. Depart 8.30am from the Royal Hotel, return 20.30. No guided tours arranged but plenty of sights to see in the city including the Roman Baths, Georgian architecture, Jane Austen Centre, museums, galleries etc.

At this time, we are merely trying to gauge demand to see if the trip is viable. By expressing interest, you are not committed to take up seats. However, in order to secure a coach, we may need to look for firm bookings and payment in the New Year.

If you are interested, please contact Colin Ellis on [membercolin@ashbyu3a.co.uk](mailto:membercolin@ashbyu3a.co.uk) or phone 01530 272592 or add your name and contact details to the sheets provided at the next Monthly or History Group meetings. If you sign the sheets, IT IS ESSENTIAL that you provide preferably an e-mail address or telephone number. Please write legibly as otherwise we will not be able to contact you.

## WELFARE

Sharon Woodland, our Welfare person, can be contacted at [welfare@ashbyu3a.co.uk](mailto:welfare@ashbyu3a.co.uk) or 01530 413867

If you know of any member who is unwell or isolating or has a family member who is unwell, please contact Sharon or any other committee member and we can see if there is anything we can do to help, whether it is collecting shopping or prescriptions, having a chat or just sending a card.

## NOVEMBER'S MONTHLY MEETING

### Ian Retson "The Woodland Trust"

Ian, who is an Ashby resident and long time member of the Woodland Trust, came along to explain to us just what the Trust is and what it does.

The Woodland Trust was formed 51 years ago to protect, restore, create and care for the UK's woodland areas.

The UK has the lowest percentage of woodland of any of the main European countries. France, Germany, Italy and Spain all have more than 30% forest cover. The UK has 13%. It has to be remembered though that the UK has a similar population to those countries but only about half the land area. Nonetheless there is still plenty of land suitable for tree cover, and trees are of course a major source of CO<sup>2</sup> absorption as well as releasing considerable amounts of oxygen and water.

Of the 13% only 7% of it is ancient woodland, that is woodlands or forests that have stood for at least 400 years. These mainly consist of native broadleaf trees of many species which contribute to the diverse habitat needed for wildlife.

As was discovered during the covid lockdown, walking in the countryside, particularly woodland, proved very beneficial for our mental and physical health. It is important that we do not let any more of our countryside be built on than is necessary.

Ian pointed out that if all the trees in the world disappeared, the earth's temperature would rise by 10decC, there would be only half the oxygen level and CO<sup>2</sup> would increase 10 fold. Life for humankind would be nearly impossible. It is estimated that there are 3 trillion trees in the world, but approximately 10% of the world's forests have been cut down since 1990.

We tend to think that trees are only used for making timber and paper but they also produce tea, coffee, chocolate, fruit, rubber and are the basis for many drugs including Taxol, the leading cancer-treatment drug.

The Woodland Trust is supporting landowners, communities and schools to plant more trees by giving away seedlings to those groups for planting. It also encourages schools and communities to undertake ancient tree surveys and to time nature's calendar to see how nature is changing to meet climate change.

In conjunction with other authorities they also have several landscape projects underway. They are helping create Glen Finglas in the Trossachs which will cover 12000 acres, creating the Welsh National Forest and maintaining Mourne Park in N. Ireland. In England work is underway to create the Northern Forest which will stretch from coast to coast through Lancashire and Yorkshire. 3 million trees have been planted so far.

The National Forest around Ashby has been a great success with 10 million trees planted so far. Tree cover has increased from 6% to 20% since 1991. Against national and international trends, it has seen an increase in bird and insect numbers and more diverse flora. And it brings in 170,000 visitors to the area each year. It is the first large forest created in England for 1000 years.

The Woodland Trust own 19 properties in the National Forest

A very interesting talk by Ian on what the Woodland Trust is, what it does and why woodland is important to us in so many ways.

## GROUP REPORTS

### **BREAKFAST**

16<sup>th</sup> October – Alpaca and Antlers Cafe

Seven of us assembled at the Alpaca and Antlers Cafe and Farm Shop, Packington for a hearty set breakfast. We all had a full English which was well cooked and served with a smile.

There is plenty to see and do at this cafe, located at Hill Farm. Alpacas can be fed and you can walk among a small herd of calves. There are Shire Horses to be admired and Bison can be viewed a short walk away.

Our next breakfast will be at 9.30 for 10am on 18th January 2024 at our firm favourite Lakeside Bistro, Shortheath Road, Moira DE12 6BW. Seven people have already signed up to go.

If you wish to join them, please let Colin Woodland know at [breakfast@ashbyu3a.co.uk](mailto:breakfast@ashbyu3a.co.uk) or sign the sheet at the Monthly Meeting.

### **CALLIGRAPHY**

14<sup>th</sup> November

6 of us met at Gill's house to compare the work we had done for our Christmas project. Most of us had chosen to use an Italic font, except Lynda who was working on an Uncial font. We all agreed it was good to go back to basics to simply practise our calligraphy.

Projects had been started ranging from a 'racy' piece of text from a novel, an extract from Dylan Thomas' 'A Child's Christmas in Wales', some Christmas poetry and Seasonal greetings in hand made cards. All very different and varied but all showing how much progress we had made since we started.

Our next meeting is at Lynda's on Dec 12th when we hope to finish our projects. Our January meeting will be our Christmas meal!!!

### **CALLIGRAPHY 2**

We are sorry to report that the December Calligraphy 2 class will be the last one we will host. For various personal reasons we are unable to continue to run the group. We have informed the members of our decision and we hope they will be able to continue and will find another suitable venue.

Yours faithfully  
Tom and Jenny

### **COMPUTERS**

20<sup>th</sup> November

There were 7 today, with a variety of problems.

Sheila has got a new laptop and is struggling to get to grips with it. Steve and John P pitched in to get her started, load up Office 365, and start using it.

John D has a problem with the Micro SD drive on his phone. This seems to be linked to the camera system playing up, but no satisfactory solution emerged. He will seek professional advice. Hopefully not needing a new phone!

Peter has run into difficulties getting his new Smart TV to run streaming services, so Richard went with him to his house and sorted it out. It seems it needed resetting to factory defaults and starting over.

We next meet on Wednesday 6th December.

## **BRIDGE**

The Bridge Group have got their dates sorted out now, at least until the end of the year, and so will be meeting at the Ivanhoe Club every Monday until Dec 18<sup>th</sup>. Times vary so check the timetable above for individual dates.

## **CRAFTS**

### **2<sup>nd</sup> November**

At last - we've moved on from Crystal Art! There were 12 ladies who squeezed into the little back room at Packington Village Hall.

We ventured into Jewellery-making for the first time. Each lady made a pair of Angel Earrings for Christmas. Then, with time left, we each made a beaded wire glass identifying ring for putting on the stem of a wine glass.

Great fun was had by all, so, look out for the Angels at the Christmas lunch.

Our next meeting is on Thursday 7th December at 10am in the back room of the Packington Village Hall.

## **COFFEE AND CHAT**

### **8th November - Garden Cafe, Swarkestone Nursery**

Seven of us braved the Swarkestone Bridge and Causeway on 8th November for Coffee and Chat at the Swarkestone Nursery Garden Cafe.

An impressive array of cakes and pastries confronted us but, just as we arrived, a fresh batch of cherry scones came out of the oven. For most, it was no contest and the scones were delicious washed down with our favourite tea or coffee. Conversation flowed freely as we caught up on everyone's news. Before departing, most found time to browse around the garden centre.

Our next meeting will be at 10am on 13th December in the Sunnyside Restaurant, Leicester Road, Ibstock LE67 6HL. Ten people have already indicated they will be there.

If you plan to join us, please let Colin Woodland know ASAP at [coffee@ashbyu3a.co.uk](mailto:coffee@ashbyu3a.co.uk)

## **CROQUET**

Croquet is not played in the winter months. We shall start again in the Spring when the clocks go forward for BST.

## **DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY**

### **2<sup>nd</sup> November**

Six sat down today to review photographs on the subject of 'Autumnal Colours'.

There was a good selection, although some were borrowed from earlier trips, due to inclement weather at many times this month.

Next time we will look at Photos on the topic of 'Winter Waters'.

We next meet on Thursday, December 7th

## **FRENCH**

### **November**

The French group continues to meet at the Ivanhoe Club in Ashby fortnightly on a Monday morning . We have tried talking in French to the group about our individual working lives and continue to practice and revise the topics previously covered.

## **DRAWING AND PAINTING**

15<sup>th</sup> November

'Twas the month before Christmas  
The last "Art" of the year.  
Five of us gathered happily  
to "draw" out our good cheer!

Santa on a Lambretta  
Robin in a boot  
Rudolph's shiny baubles  
on his antlers – what a hoot!  
The Fir Tree, heavily laden  
with colours shining bright,  
The glow of yuletide candles  
gently spread their light.

Next month in December  
No painting will be done  
instead we gonna meet  
for a coffee and a bun!

Happy Christmas from the Drawing and Painting Group

## **FOOD FROM AFAR**

2<sup>nd</sup> November – Pepitos Restaurant, Derby

As the eye of storm Babet passed over the Leicestershire/Derbyshire border, six brave souls travelled to Pepitos Restaurant in Derby to sample their Mexican cuisine. The restaurant was considerably colder than we would have liked but the fellowship was warm and cosy.

The restaurant supplied a very good quality meal at a very reasonable price. We were served with a smile and given close attention throughout. Everyone agreed that despite the coolness of the room, we had an enjoyable time.

The next soiree will be to La Torre Italian Restaurant, 48 High Street, Coalville LE67 3EE on 7th December at 6pm for 6.30. Eight people have already signed up.

If you wish to attend, please let Colin Woodland know at [food from afar@ashbyu3a.co.uk](mailto:food_from_afar@ashbyu3a.co.uk)

## **GARDENING**

16<sup>th</sup> November - 'The Joy of Gardening'

At today's meeting we had a talk on the joy of gardening, given by Griselda, owner of the Dower House in Melbourne which we visited earlier this year. The meeting was well attended with over 40 members, including 6 newcomers. Griselda explained how gardening is good for our mental health and we were taken through the seasons with some excellent slides, some taken at the Dower House, and some at gardens at hospitals and hospices, even some of gardening at prisons. A very informative and interesting talk.

## **FAMILY HISTORY**

### **8<sup>th</sup> November**

An excellent turnout of 10 today, with both tables occupied. We had one new member: Anne Woolgrove, new also to the u3a, who observed the proceedings and was warmly welcomed by the members.

Shirly Bunting returned to the fold, and members gathered round to help her look at Parish Records whilst Keith continued his work on his grandfather's military history and Eileen continued with her delving into 17th century records.

Ana and John D looked at the families she has identified with Ana in them, narrowing down the results to those where the name is not just a misspelling of Ann, Anne, Annie etc. JD showed her the family trees he has constructed using offline software Family Tree Maker, displayed on his TV for ease, together with the matching folders of supporting records. We eliminated trees that did not fit her criteria. JD later emailed the folder that did fit those criteria. As a bonus, she identified an ancestor who had been jailed for obscenity!

Carolyn is on the trail of her 4th great grandparents from Yorkshire whilst Mary loaded up a CD of the Directory of Occupations for reviewing in her search for information on her ancestors.

Jane is looking for a good offer on Ancestry subscription, as it is getting quite expensive. So far, no good offers have emerged. Eileen passed on a URL link which she thinks might help. She has also started to map out where her ancestors came from: always an illuminating exercise!

Linda had difficulty logging on to the Internet with her iPad, so JD lent her his. Jane was on hand to help.

At Coffee break, the whole group gathered in the lounge for a demonstration of Family Tree Maker on the TV. This is an old version but served to highlight the different functions of the software, and how it compares with Ancestry and FindMyPast. In essence, the latter are oriented to searching the Internet, with Tree facilities, whilst the former is designed as a presentation and printing facility with many more options. We agreed that Ancestry is a superior tool for search, compared with FMP, whilst FMP has better access to records. Neither can match the facilities for presentation and printing that FTM has, though, and it would serve as a very useful off-line backup.

More work is needed to see if purchasing the current version, which synchronises with Ancestry is worthwhile.

The members all seemed to appreciate the session and it is proposed that more of these occasional chats by members on topics of special interest to them would be very useful to the membership.

We meet again on Wednesday, 13th December.

## **INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE**

### **22<sup>nd</sup> November. Planning meeting for next year**

16 members came to the Bulls Head in Market Street to try to plan next years trips. There were plenty of good ideas and we have got a reasonable list of places to visit. A few members are researching the feasibility of many of them and hopefully we shall shortly be able to publish at least the first few visits.

We won't be meeting in December as something called Christmas gets in the way and so our next trip will be on Jan 24th next year. Details to follow.



## **HISTORY**

23<sup>rd</sup> November. 'Some Mother's Son' by Sandra Moore.

Today we had 35 members attend to listen to our own Sandra Moore's talk, entitled 'Some Mother's Son', about some of the soldiers of WWI buried or commemorated in Leicester's Belgrave Cemetery.

She presented it in the form of a slide show, introduced with photos of seaside scenes from around the turn of the 19th century, setting a poignant contrast to her primary subject matter.

In the dress of a poor housewife from that time, the mother of Edward, one of her subjects, she introduced herself as Eliza Millington, and told her stories as one of the women who sent their men off to War and did not get them back.

The slides followed the short lives of a handful of young men, born in the late 19th Century, as they signed up for King and Country. Full of hope and in the sure knowledge they would be home by Christmas, they marched away from their homes and loved ones. All but one was to perish without even engaging in combat.

One was killed in training in a cavalry regiment, before ever even leaving his home county of Leicestershire. Another, after a war in which he never saw the enemy, was drowned one month before Armistice Day, when his ship, returning from Ireland to a waiting welcome Party, was sunk by a U Boat.

The one who fought, a young Major from a well-to-do family, served with distinction through all the worst fighting, yet died in 1919 of complications from a wound. And still many more died years or decades later from wounds or more subtle damage, directly related to their experiences.

'Eliza' recounted her stories in a matter of fact but profoundly impressive style, leaving us all with a sense of the futility of that particular War.

It is unsettling to realise that most of us had fathers, uncles, or grandfathers in that War. To the next generation these people will be history in a way they cannot be for us.

Thank you, Eliza.

## **READING**

15<sup>th</sup> November – "Animal Dreams" by Barbara Kingsolver.

The group met at Annie's house to discuss our latest book "Animal Dreams" by Barbara Kingsolver. Report to follow shortly.

The group is not meeting in December and so they will meet next on Jan 17<sup>th</sup> 2024

## **LUNCH**

9<sup>th</sup> November – The Wheatsheaf (Harvester), Loughborough

Having parked in the ample car park, 14 luncheoners descended upon the Wheatsheaf Harvester in Loughborough. The restaurant offered an extensive menu that included a complimentary salad. The staff were attentive and helpful. The food was tasty and well presented.

The staff were patient and never made us feel pressured or hurried.

The next lunch will be the Christmas Lunch on 14<sup>th</sup> December at the Willesley Park Golf Club. This lunch is organised by Glenys Morrice. If you have not already booked, I fear that all the places are already filled. Never mind, you can join us for lunch on 11<sup>th</sup> January at the Bull's Head, Market Street, Ashby. Seventeen people have already indicated they will be there but there is plenty of room for more.

If you wish to join us, please let Colin Woodland know ASAP at [luncheon@ashbyu3a.co.uk](mailto:luncheon@ashbyu3a.co.uk)

## **MUSIC APPRECIATION**

### **1<sup>st</sup> November at Neil's**

We had a great turnout this month at Neil's house. 11 of us, including new member Sarah, arrived ready to offer their selections.

Mike started us off, reminding us that it was All Hallows Day and so his first choice was "Witchcraft" by Frank Sinatra. A classic. Nev followed this with Jennifer Warnes and "Ain't no cure for love". A new song to many of us. And a good one.

Yogi offered one of his favourite Irish songs, this time Mickey Dam by Daiori Farrell, a grand tale of an Irish labourer working on a dam outside Glasgow.

Janet had chosen a well known song "Windmills of your mind" but a lesser known and excellent version by Elaine Paige. Then Sid's first choice was the lovely "Moon Shadow" by Cat Stevens.

Sallie then played us "Gymnopedie #1" written by Eric Satie. A beautiful soothing and relaxing piece of piano playing. Heather's choice was music by John Williams, the composer not the guitarist. This piece was the "Jurassic Park Suite", from the film of the same name.

Dorothy's first piece was the inimitable Louis Armstrong playing "C-Jam blues". A tune you probably know without knowing its name. Sublime playing. Brenda had chosen another classic, this one being "It might as well rain until September" written and sung by Carole King.

Neil closed the first round with Linda Ronstadt singing "Cry like a rain storm". A beautiful song by a beautiful singer who can unfortunately no longer perform due to Parkinsons disease.

Mike then gave us a comedy piece in the form of Dudley Moore playing the "Colonel Bogie March" in the style of Beethoven, with multiple false endings. A very talented piano player.

Nev's second choice was Casey Abrams, a very talented singer and double-bass player doing a great swing version of Lionel Richie's "Hello".

Yogi offered another Irish piece, this time a more serious song "The maid of Culmore" beautifully sung by the choir of University College Dublin.

Janet then played a very well known piece, but none the worse for that, Elton John's "Candle in the wind". Sid had chosen REM's "Smiley, happy people" as his 2nd piece.

And then Sallie followed with the rousing "Toccatina and Fugue in D minor" by Bach played on the church organ and it rattled the roof tiles.

Heather's second was "Journey through America" played by the Royal Philharmonic from the "Hooked on classics" series of albums. This track is a medley of a dozen American tunes whizzed through in under 4 mins. Great fun and which Dorothy followed with Norah Jones singing "Shoot the moon". A lovely wistful song.

Brenda had chosen another classic, "Maria" from West Side Story. This version was from the 1961 film starring Richard Beymer as Tony and Natalie Wood as Maria, although Natalie's voice was dubbed by the ubiquitous Marnie Nixon.

Neil's 2nd was Tami Lynn singing "I'm gonna run away from you" which as Neil pointed out became a hit in Britain when it was picked up by the Northern Soul dance movement.

Finally, Sarah, who had not brought any music but was just intending to listen to what styles of music we play (Everything! – Ed) was persuaded to chose a favourite piece of music which Neil then located on the internet to play. She chose "This is me" sung by Keala Settle from the film Greatest Showman. Not a bad first choice Sarah. Welcome to the gang.

## **RECORDER**

2<sup>nd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> November

We will have had 3 meetings this month, as we decided to have an extra meeting on 30th November, and have a two week break (as usual) before our next meeting on 14th December. We are having our festive lunch after the meeting on 30th.

We have introduced some new music this month: The Planets' Feet, by Lance Eccles, published in 2001. This is a suite of three pieces, and is much more recent than most of our repertoire, and we are having to work at it.

We are also playing The Isla Reel and The Dark Island, both arranged for recorders by Marg Hall. We still play some slightly older music: the Cantique de Jean Racine by Faure is a favourite, and we are bringing Corelli's Christmas Concerto out for Christmas, as well as some more traditional seasonal music.

We still have 9 members, and two other people have expressed an interest in joining us in the New Year. Last weekend, four of us went to an SRP (Society of Recorder Players) Workshop, organised by Warwick branch at Stoneleigh. We had the chance to play some music of the 20th and 21st centuries, written specially for recorders, with more players than we are used to! Great fun. We learned how to make some very strange sounds with our instruments!.

## **SCRABBLE**

November

We are having our Christmas Lunch at the Bull's Head on 11th December (not a normal Scrabble Day). So at our next meeting we shall be asking for pre-ordering. The menu has been posted on the WhatsApp Scrabble page.

We meet next on 4th at 10.30, all welcome.

## **SOCIAL EVENTS**



### **CHRISTMAS LUNCH**



To remind you again, the Christmas Lunch is on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> at 12.30 for 1pm at Willesley Park Golf Club. All tickets are now sold.



### **BURNS SUPPER – 25<sup>th</sup> January**



Tickets £30 inc wine and a wee dram, are on sale now available at the December monthly meeting or from Glenys at [socials@ashbyu3a.co.uk](mailto:socials@ashbyu3a.co.uk)

Piper Don Jarram will welcome us as usual before the traditional piping in of the haggis, followed by all the usual entertainment and of course traditional food and wine.

Full details above. See Forthcoming Events.

Please pay by bank transfer to 08-92-99 67259878 or by cheque to "Ashby u3a" marked "Burns supper"

## **SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY**

14<sup>th</sup> November.- 'Zoos: the science behind the scenes' by Megan Wright

Megan Wright from Twycross Zoo Education and Training Department gave us a fascinating talk about how science is used at Twycross Zoo. The zoo opened 60 years ago and aims to educate and inspire all age groups. The zoo's aims are: supporting ex-situ animal populations; protecting wildlife species and habitats; inspiring positive change for wildlife; enhancing the value of zoos for nature and society; caring for ecosystems; and becoming environmentally sustainable. Megan drew on university research carried out at Twycross, giving several examples, including details of a study of chimpanzees' behavioural repertoire which led to a redesigned enclosure, more closely replicating their natural environment. The zoo makes extensive use of the Zoo Monitor App to track animal behaviour, recording feeding patterns, location, interaction with other individuals, sleeping patterns etc, with analysis of the results leading to improved living conditions for the animals concerned. We were interested to learn that 2 of the chimps have implanted pacemakers and that the animals are susceptible to human diseases such as diabetes and Covid. We also learnt that the primates are not fed bananas as they are on a low sugar, fruit free diet for their health!

The zoo is the proud holder of the Studbook for Siamang Gibbons in European zoos – a genetic tool which ensures species are not hybridized and avoids inbreeding, in some cases by using contraception. Megan introduced us to nanopore sequencing, a portable system for DNA profiling of an animal that can be used in the wild and can be used to combat the illegal wildlife trade. She gave the example of Mongolian Marmots and Snow Leopards, where a seized item made of fur can be tested and the species of its origin identified.

Discussion about the future of zoos ranged from the use of animal holograms, loss of habitat in the wild, potential measures for eventually releasing threatened animals bred in captivity back into their natural habitat, the politics of moving animals across borders, to the effects of war. A very exciting development is the scheduled opening of the National Science and Conservation Centre at the zoo in 2025. The zoo gives conservation talks every month which can be booked. Megan recommended we make use of the iNaturalist app to log plants, animals, insects, birds etc when out and about as the data recorded is used for research.

An entertaining and educational talk which really opened our eyes to the ways zoos have developed since the days of chimps' tea parties.

For the second part of the meeting Kurt Kovach began with This Day in History: It was World Diabetes Day: 100 years since Frederick Banting and John Macleod won a Nobel Prize for discovering insulin. In 1716 Gottfried Wilhelm Leibnitz died and in 1922 the BBC was officially opened.

In October Nobel Prizes are traditionally awarded: so far 63 prizes have been given to 62 women compared to 894 men.

We were then introduced to Professor Avi Loeb and his obsession with UAPs (Unidentified Alien Phenomena) which used to be called UFOs. He headed up many professional bodies and was the author of 8 books and over 1000 scientific papers. In 2012 Time Magazine selected Loeb as one of the 25 most influential people in space.

In 2017 an object was detected by the Panoramic – Survey Telescope and Rapid Response System in Hawaii. Initially it was designated as a comet, then as an asteroid and finally it was recognised as an interstellar object and named OUMUAMUA, a Hawaiian name which loosely translates as 'scout'.

The consensus was that because of its speed and trajectory, its origin was from outside our Solar System. It was very odd, very large, 100m long, either cigar shaped or pancake shaped - a very odd shape to occur naturally. It was rotating constantly, reflecting light from its surface. At its brightest, it was over 10x as reflective as typical space rocks. So reflective it could have been made of metal. Professor Loeb surmised that based on its shape, reflectivity and its acceleration without any tail or

coma, OUMUAMUA was a one-in-a-million object, acting as if it had a light sail attached, which the solar radiation was acting on to accelerate it away.

When you consider that ¼ of our galaxy's 200 billion stars are orbited by planets that are habitable, the way Earth is and have surface water and the chemicals needed for life, it would be surprising if we were the only life in our Solar System, let alone the Universe.

A few meetings ago we learned of a meteor that landed in the ocean off Papua, New Guinea. Analysis of the pieces recovered revealed that they were 84% iron, 8% silicon, 4% magnesium, 2% titanium plus some trace elements. This would make it an artificial alloy.

This project is not popular with mainstream scientists, but as Professor Loeb says. 'We are quite happy to accept the idea of the multiverse, despite having no evidence for it. We happily talk about dark matter, despite having no evidence for that, so why not aliens?'

The next meeting will be on Tuesday 12 December at 2pm in Packington Village Hall where Tony Davison will talk about 'My Search for the Snow Leopard' – his search in Mongolia for the elusive snow leopard and the adventure that followed. Afterwards there will be some festive fun and seasonal fare.

## **WINE APPRECIATION**

### **15<sup>th</sup> November**

Last month we were due to taste "Classic French" wines presented by Mike but due to many of us being unavailable due to colds, holidays, child minding etc, the meeting was postponed to this month. Mike managed to avoid drinking all the wines meanwhile, so he didn't have to go and buy them all afresh! All wines were from Tesco this time, some bought when there was a 25% off discount. Nine of us made it this month including one potential new member.

If you are tasting classic French wines, you have to start with Champagne, but our budget doesn't quite run to decent ones so Mike started with Blanquette de Limoux from deep in the South of France. A decent substitute for the real thing at a fraction of the price. £6.75 from Tesco with various discounts, £10 full price. We concluded that it had a strong apple flavour and would make a fine aperitif. And amazing value at that discount price.

Next was a Maison Castel sauvignon blanc from Touraine in the Loire Valley. This was very much typical of the region and pretty good. Not as flavourful as New World sauv blancs, but a good flavour once you adjusted to that lighter style.

Our third white was a burgundy. La Burgondie Macon-Villages Chardonnay. £11 full price. We were very disappointed in this. Very little flavour and without the richness one expects from Burgundy. It scored badly from almost everyone.

On to the reds. First up was a Cote du Rhone, Tesco Finest Signargues at £8.50. On first taste several of us thought this had a very strange taste, but after allowing it to breathe a bit and tasting it with the recommended Comté cheese, which Annie just happened to have in the house, it was transformed. A delicious rich blackcurrant and cherry flavour with a little spice, just as you expect syrah wines to have.

Next was a claret. After Champagne, you can't get anything more typically French. This Montagne Saint-Emilion at £10 was again a little disappointing. Mostly merlot grape, as is normal for St Emilion, this claimed in the tasting notes to be of great depth and character. Not this bottle! Reasonably fruity with blackcurrant and a little spice, it was ok but not exceptional.

And down to the last wine of the evening. Again our budget didn't run to a decent red Burgundy so Mike settled for something a bit left-field: A merlot from Carcassonne in the South of France costing £12.50 by Gerard Bertrand. This was everything that the claret wasn't. Full-bodied, rich, dark and with plenty of dark fruit. We almost unanimously voted this the best wine of the night, but taking into the exceptional price, decided that the fizz from Limoux was the best value and a close second overall.

## **SUPPER CLUB**

### **23<sup>rd</sup> November – The George and Dragon, Thringstone**

This month we had a full house of 14 members and 3 guests eager to taste the food at the George and Dragon. We had pre-ordered and once everyone had arrived the starters were promptly served.

12 had ordered starters and the goats cheese and walnut salad proved particularly popular with 7 opting for it. And very nice it was too.

Mains followed quick quickly after with excellent fuss-free service. Most agreed that the portions were very generous, which was probably the only real complaint! Much better to have too much than too little, but one or two people felt somewhat overwhelmed.

Orders were taken for desserts and amazingly some people actually had room for them. There was quite a long wait for them but they were well worth waiting for. Beautifully plated up, large and apparently very tasty (I had chosen to pass on dessert!). No complaints there.

A very nice evening was had by all, and for once we had no problems with the bill. It all tallied up correctly at the end. Good food, excellent service and good company. What more could you want.

## **SHORT WALKING**

### **17<sup>th</sup> November. Burton Washlands replacing October's washed out walk.**

Again a lovely day and six people met at the car park near St Peter's Church Stapenhill. We set off as usual to cross the road into Burton using the bridge and thence down to the Ferry bridge for walkers and cyclists. As a change from the usual route we walked into Burton and crossed the front of the Further Education college and then across the front of the indoor market. We then went around the church and across what I assume was the cemetery and straight to the library and Bookachinos. The cafe was very busy and with only one person on duty but the coffees arrived. After the break we looked at the paintings displayed in the library and returned by the path nearest the river passing the statue in homage to Marmite. The return path was muddy but not excessively so. We returned via the ferry bridge to the Stapenhill flower display which was rather barren. We had to walk through the ducks and swans which expected to be fed and were quite intimidating. The distance was just over 2 miles.

## **MEDIUM WALKING**

### **13<sup>th</sup> November. Packington, led by Val**

After early rain it turned out to be a nice sunny, if rather windy morning. 8 of us started from the car park in Packington and walked out across some very soggy fields to Normanton-le-Heath, where we crossed the road and headed up the track, at least this was much drier underfoot. We stopped at the side of the track for our coffee break in the pleasant sunshine. We continued on round the back of Jubilee Woods to Spring Lane where we headed back to Packington past the fields of Deer and Bison. 4.6miles.

## **LONGER WALKING**

### **21<sup>st</sup> November. Huddlesford, led by Kevin**

Eighteen of us arrived for this morning's walk at The Plough, Huddlesford, the largest number since the beginning of the year. It was dry and bright as we set off along the Coventry Canal for the first half mile before leaving the Canal and walking though Whittington Village. After leaving the village we joined a path that followed the perimeter of the Whittington Barracks rifle range, fortunately none of us were shot before rejoining the Canal for a short time and following a road and path passing the Fisherwick Lakes (Old gravel workings) now used for fishing. After crossing a further couple of fields and short section of lane we returned to the Plough for a very pleasant lunch which was served very quickly and efficiently. 7.5 miles.

Here is a list of your committee members and how to contact them:

<b>Role</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Contact email</b>
Chairman	John Pilgrim	<a href="mailto:chairman@ashbyu3a.co.uk">chairman@ashbyu3a.co.uk</a>
Business Secretary	Tony Smith	<a href="mailto:secretary@ashbyu3a.co.uk">secretary@ashbyu3a.co.uk</a>
Treasurer	Val Reed	<a href="mailto:treasurer@ashbyu3a.co.uk">treasurer@ashbyu3a.co.uk</a>
Membership Secretary	Iain Banns	<a href="mailto:members@ashbyu3a.co.uk">members@ashbyu3a.co.uk</a>
Interest Group Co-ordinator	David Spiers	<a href="mailto:interestg@ashbyu3a.co.uk">interestg@ashbyu3a.co.uk</a>
Welfare	Sharon Woodland	<a href="mailto:welfare@ashbyu3a.co.uk">welfare@ashbyu3a.co.uk</a>
Speaker seeker	Bill Wilson	<a href="mailto:speakers@ashbyu3a.co.uk">speakers@ashbyu3a.co.uk</a>
Communications	Mike Stow	<a href="mailto:webmaster@ashbyu3a.co.uk">webmaster@ashbyu3a.co.uk</a>
Social Secretary	Glenys Morrice	<a href="mailto:socials@ashbyu3a.co.uk">socials@ashbyu3a.co.uk</a>
Member	Colin Ellis	<a href="mailto:membercolin@ashbyu3a.co.uk">membercolin@ashbyu3a.co.uk</a>
Member	Yogi Godwin	<a href="mailto:memberyogi@ashbyu3a.co.uk">memberyogi@ashbyu3a.co.uk</a>